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# THE SPARK

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"From a Spark shall arise a Flame"

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THEORETICAL ORGAN OF MARXIST WORKERS LEAGUE

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## SHARECROPPERS OF THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

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Party and the Proletariat—  
Answer to Anti-Bolshevik Critics

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LAST APPEAL OF HUNGARIAN SOVIET REPUBLIC

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Trade Unions and Proletarian Power

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UNEMPLOYED RESOLUTION



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The relation of the sharecroppers to the American revolution necessitates a complete understanding of the farm question. To miscomprehend the position of agriculture in the United States means first, to have an erroneous view of the agrarian tasks the coming revolution will have to face. Secondly, flowing from that false conception will necessarily follow the establishment of an incorrect relationship between the proletariat and the farmers.

.....

The pattern of Southern tenancy was set at the end of the Civil War. The war, which represented the victory of industrial capital over the slave economy, resulted in a gradual decline of agriculture with only occasional spurts to mar the general picture. From the period of about 1861 to 1896 the farmers as a whole did not share in the gains arising out of the upward movement of industrial America. After 1896, however, due to the rise in prices, the farmers did get a definite portion of the wealth, although their mortgages and indebtedness increased. Of course, this rise benefited the upper layers of the farmers only. This is proven by the fact that farm tenancy which was 25.6% in 1880 rose to 35.3% in 1900 and then rose again to 37% in 1910. Agricultural production increased on the whole- the number of farms rose from 1,449,000 in 1850 to 5,737,000 in 1900 and the actual acreage from 293 million to 838 million. This great agrarian development was a tremendous factor in the upswing of American industry and prosperity. In 1879 the great exports of wheat, largely a result of very serious grain shortage in Europe (which created an increased demand and higher prices for American wheat) played an important role in the revival and upward movement of prosperity. The farmers bought large amounts of industrial goods in the form of agricultural equipment; the same elements created new markets for manufactured consumption goods. The fact that the United States was a debtor nation at the time had a lot to do with the gains that were accruing to the farmers. They provided the bulk of the exports which were used to pay for the imports of capital and goods which stimulated the rapid expansion of American industrialism. This was one of the most important factors accounting for the relative prosperity of the farmers. Their goods were used to pay off the debts of the United States which at the time was a debtor nation (A tremendous amount of foreign capital was in the U.S., mostly British). Thus the rise of industrial America carried in its wake a momentary upswing in the general conditions of the farmers.

#### Change From Debtor to Creditor

The exploitation of agriculture was inseparably associated with capitalist growth; it provided a labor supply, cheap food, raw materials and markets and it bore the brunt of the costs of industrialization and accumulation in their earlier stages (Also, the debtor position of the United States provided prosperity for the farmers in as much as their products were used to pay off the debts)

As Corey says in his 'Decline of American Capitalism': "The sharp fall in agricultural prices, a result of the post war deflation which threw most of the burdens of deflation upon the farmers, contributed greatly to capitalist prosperity-by increasing real wages and releasing urban purchasing power for manufactured goods and by lowering the cost of raw materials. In spite of much lower incomes, the farmers were forced by the low prices of agricultural products to increase productivity with improved methods and mechanization: the output (less exports) of agricultural machinery rose from \$101 million in 1923 to \$137 million in 1929. Most farmers did not share in the prosperity. But not only was the agricultural distress no bar to prosperity, it was one of the contributing causes; the final proof of the decline and hopeless state of American agriculture" (my emphasis)



From this we see the definite exclusion in the post war period of the farmers; prosperity flourished while depression prevailed in agriculture. One word of caution must be stressed here. Let it not be imagined that the causes of the decline in American agriculture are to be found exclusively in the domestic scene. The decline, not only in the U.S. but in every country, is inextricably related to the international arena- whence flows the general decline. (This last point will not be investigated too deeply in the article) We are only sketching the general outline of the position of agriculture in the United States in order to relate it to our main topic.

The World War, as we know, witnessed the United States stepping up among the front ranks of the world imperialists as a creditor nation. This reversal in position made it incumbent upon American imperialism to alter its policy. The creditor position and the changes resulting therefrom are adequately summed up by Henry Wallace in his 1937 report to the President: "Our debtor-creditor position and our general balance of payments bear upon our foreign trade. This is a creditor country. As such, it should be prepared to buy abroad relatively more goods and services than it sells. Otherwise the countries in debt to it cannot make their payments." Herein is the key to the change in policy after the war and also the present day reciprocal trade agreements policy of the Roosevelt government. The stagnation of world agriculture, the change to a creditor nation and the loss of European markets combined to further the decline of American agriculture. From the same report we learn that agricultural products on the whole comprised only 27% of total exports of the U.S. This is the smallest proportion in the history of our foreign trade. How small that figure really is may be gauged by the fact that in ten years ending in 1932 agricultural products comprised 40% of the total exports. After the war the U.S. rose to a creditor nation to the tune of sixteen billions of dollars. A creditor nation like the U.S. cannot export more than it imports and at the same time expect the repayment of loans from debtor nations (provided of course that new loans are continuously being made). And so we have Roosevelt imperialism reshaping its policy with the view of giving these nations a chance to repay their debts- with the farming population suffering still more and having to get along on a basis of plowing under plus loans. The actual depth of this hopelessness will be brought out below.

#### Agriculture A Doomed Field Under Monopoly Capitalism

In 1928 the farmers' share of the national income was 7.1% although they constituted 15.6% of the gainfully occupied. The farmers' share of the national income began to fall after the Civil War. The following rates will show that as a business proposition farming was almost a total loss: the rate of return on the operators net capital investment fell from 5.4% in 1919 to 3.7% in 1928 with only 1.6% as the average for 1920-1928 (all figures from Agricultural Yearbook; Statistical Abstract; Statistics of Income) Again from Corey we have this very interesting quote: "If the value of food produced and consumed on farms is deducted from the farmers total, their share becomes much smaller, below 5%. Most of the farmers income is spent on the payment of interest and taxes and in the purchase of equipment and supplies, which are inescapable expenses. Their purchase of both consumption and capital goods did not account for more than 7% of the total. The farmer, whose share in consumption decreased sharply is no longer necessary to capitalist prosperity." (my emphasis) The farmers' present position under monopoly capital is a doomed one. They are dis-counted and no longer needed by industrial capitalism. To prove this last point we will quote from a publication of the N.Y. Trust Co, 'The Index' of January 1932:

"Another view widely held but no so frequently expressed is that,



relatively, agriculture no longer constitutes a major factor in our highly industrialized economy. While (the farmers expenditures) are important and probably as in the case of exports represents a margin on which a good proportion of profits are based, they are not large enough to warrant the assertion that the national welfare depends to an overwhelming extent upon agricultural prosperity, or that recovery from depression can be brought about by restoring farm prices to their previous levels...In recent years American industry has not been affected substantially by changes in farm purchasing power."

We need but to quote a capitalist publication in order to prove our contention that in the present era agriculture is a doomed field of endeavor. As a factor in the present economy it is nil- a total loss from the business point of view as our figures above proved.

#### Farm Income, Prices, Holdings, Population

The conclusion of the war brought with it, as we have already established, a tremendous drop in prices, income, etc. In 1919 the income (estimated in millions of dollars) was \$16,935 and in 1933 it was \$6,256. From 1921 to 1929 due partly to the increased production income rose a little. In 1929 the decline in agricultural prices was up to 63%! In 1927 the farmers obtained 20 cents a pound for their cotton; it was 16 cents in 1929 and 6 cents in 1931. In 1933 they obtained 10 cents a pound due to the intervention of the government. Three times in five years the price jumped more than 40%- once up and twice down!! (Figures from the report of the National Emergency Council) By 1932 the gross income of the farmers had fallen to 44% of their 1929 level. It is estimated that in 1928 the farmers (all groups) who constituted 15.6 of the population had but 15.4% of the wealth of the country. Sixty years ago they had 36% of the wealth of the United States. In 1929, the farmers were 15.5% of the population- a fall of one tenth percent in one year.

The number of farms rising steadily from 1,449,073 in 1858 to 6,448,342 in 1920 fell to 6,288,641 in 1930, a drop of 159,695 farms in 10 years. The farm population fell from 31,614,000 in 1920 to 30,447,000 in 1930. A surplus farm population appeared in 1909-1919 because of the small increase in the number of persons working on farms. About this surplus population Corey (IBID) says: "It has since grown and will continue to grow as productivity in farming rises and output is stationary or falls." Not only have we the gradual proletarianization of the farm surplus, something which bids well for the coming American revolution, but we have had an absolute displacement of labor in agriculture. In 1929 American farms gave work to 540,000 fewer persons than in 1919.

American farming is gradually decaying to as hopeless a position as the one in which European farming has been for the past century. Long ago when there appeared a surplus farm population in Europe it was either absorbed by the expansion of the native industry or by another method- emigration, a great deal of it to the U.S. And now American farming is producing a surplus population in the era of decay capitalism when industry is unable to absorb those who cannot find work on the farm. It reminds one of the tremendous hordes of people who wandered Europe, dispossessed from their farms, their holdings and their livelihood. Capitalism in its rush to greater profits creates the stumbling blocks which will cause it to stop, fall and be smashed.

#### Holdings and Strata-Farm Tenancy

Lewis Corey estimates that there are about 500,000 capitalist farmers, 200,000 of the middle class type and 3,500,000 of the poor farmers. The National Emergency Council's report to the President estimates that the mortgage debt has been growing steadily for the last twenty years. The agricultural yearbook says that in 1935 2,350,313 farms were mortgaged. And from the same N.E.C. report we learn that "...a checkup in 46 scattered



hands of corporations, mostly banks and insurance companies, which had been forced to foreclose their mortgages."

This process has forced more than half of the South's farmers into the status of tenants, tilling land they do not own. The Dept. of Agriculture Report for 1937 tells us that tenants and sharecroppers number about 2,565,000 persons and represent about 42% of all of our farmers.

Farm tenancy, unlike Topsy, did not "just grow". A situation whereby half of all the fertile land of the United States is tenant farmed needs more of an explanation. As we said above, the present scene was set by the Civil War. The slave economy was destroyed. Thousands of former slave owners were left with plenty of land but with no labor or capital. Hundreds of thousands of former slaves and impoverished whites were merely left standing willing to work, but no land. The result was the crop-sharing system. Under this system the land was worked by men who paid for the privilege with a share of their harvest. Naturally cash crops were worked- in other words those crops which would yield better money payments as against the others (Thus today 60% of all the cotton farmers are sharecroppers) As a result, over wide areas of the South cash-cropping, one crop farming and tenant farming have come to mean practically the same thing.

Tenant families form the most unstable part of the population. More than a third of them move every year, and only a small percentage stay on the same place long enough to carry on a five year crop rotation. Such frequent moves are the result of the traditional tenure system under which most renters hold the land by a mere spoken agreement, with no assurance that they will be on the same place next season. Less than 2% have written leases which give them security of tenure for more than one year.

Under these circumstances the tenant has no incentive to protect the soil, plant cover crops or keep buildings in repair. On the contrary, he has every reason to mine the soil for every possible penny of immediate cash return.

Tenancy is very prevalent in the corn, wheat, cotton and tobacco areas. In many places in the South the tenants represent more than 80% of what are erroneously termed farmers. Approximately 41% of all tenant farmers in the U.S. are in the cotton belt. In corn and wheat 44% of what are called farmers are in reality tenants. Sharecropping works on the basis of the cropper receiving half of the pay that the landowner receives at the end of the year- out of this he must pay all expenses. When we realize that the cropper gets all of his tools and lives on credit we can see his actual earnings diminishing to practically nothing. The negro sharecropper receives about \$182 a year and the white not much more. The sharecropper's status can be likened to that of a worker in a company town. Just as the latter sees his very small pay diminish before his eyes in the form of payments of debts owed to the company owned stores, etc- so does the sharecropper find himself continuously in debt to the landlord. Even the report of the N.E.C. admits this: "...the majority of Southern tenant farmers must depend for credit on their landlords or the 'furnish merchant' who supplies seed, food, fertilizer. Their advances, in fact, have largely replaced currency for a considerable part of the rural population. For security, the landlord or merchant takes a lien on the entire crop, which is to be turned over to him immediately after harvest in settlement of the debt. Usually he keeps the books and fixes the interest rate. Even if he is fair and does not charge excessive interest, the tenants find themselves in debt at the end of the year." The comparison to a company town is very striking indeed. The workers also find themselves in debt- because of the company store, the company owned homes, the company owned bank, etc



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The sharecropper like the worker has but to slave, get a little monetary return as reimbursement, and then pay it all back to those that gave it to him. The landlord like the boss takes it out of his right pocket only to have it returned to his left pocket.

### Living Conditions

About the living conditions of the sharecroppers and tenants little need be said. Their horrible conditions are well known, and many's the tale that has been written about them. Statistics show that the richest state in the South ranks lower in per capita income than the poorest state outside the region. In 1937 the average income in the South was \$314; in the rest of the country it was \$604, or nearly twice as much. Even the so-called prosperity year of 1929 showed that farm population received an average gross income of only \$186 a year-and out of this had to be paid all their operating expenses, tools, fertilizers, seed, taxes, interest on debts, etc. One can imagine what was left for the bare necessities of life. It is hardly surprising, therefore, such comparatively ordinary items as autos, radios, and books are relatively rare in many Southern country areas. But this is a general picture. The conditions of the sharecroppers is even worse!

"For more than half of the South's farm families-the 53% who are tenants-without land of their own-incomes are far lower. Many thousands of them are living in poverty comparable to that of the poorest peasants in Europe. A recent study of Southern cotton plantations indicated that the average tenant family received an income of only \$73 a person for a year's work. Earnings of sharecroppers ranged from \$38 to \$87 per person and an income of \$38 annually means only a little more than 10 cents a day"(NEC Report-my emphasis). The almost unbelievable ignorance of these people is the source of many a joke of our "better comedians". But when we probe into the actual conditions the comedy becomes tinged with a goody portion of tragedy. Aware of their very low income (if it can be termed "income") we can very well picture the modern facilities of these people-the electrical equipment, running water, homes, etc. In 1930 illiteracy was higher in the South than any place else. They are more subject to sickness than the people of a similar area.

The same report states that by the most conservative figures four million Southern families should be rehoused. This is one half of all the families in the South. It is obvious that the houses themselves would convert the city slums into mansions by comparison. Not only are the houses rotten and antiquated, and the breeding spot of all diseases, but they are situated in the worst places-next to mills or mines or on low swampy land subject to floods and not good for anything else. Lack of running water and impure water supplies are rather common-all integral parts of that well-known Southern hospitality. As regards child labor the South leads the rest of the nation in both industrial and farm work. This employment of children naturally has a very detrimental affect on their education and physical well-being. When we consider wages on a whole we are reminded of Marx's statement that the worse the conditions are under which the proletarian labors, the lower are his wages. This is exceedingly so in the South. Wages are tremendously low-especially to the women and children. The Southern families are in much need of clothes, food, and even the basic necessities of life. We must conclude that it seems that it is really true what they are saying about good old Dixie!!

### Proletarianization and Replacement of the Sharecropper

Further investigation into the terrible plight of the sharecropper will reveal that now he is heir to two effects of the system under which he operated



ates. On the one hand, the white sharecropper is being replaced by the <sup>6)</sup>renter, or by the negro with the larger family, and two, he is becoming proletarianized.

The picture of the Southern sharecropping system was once simply this: the agricultural worker without land, implements, or stock of his own, would enter into an agreement with a landowner to farm a portion of his land. The landowner would agree to supply the tenant's needs including food and clothing, against a repayment at harvest time. Thus the tenant becomes a sharecropper. Now many landowners are combining sharecropping with renting by making the tenant turn over to him a minimum number of bales of cotton. Under sharecropping the 'cropper and the landlord divided half and half (not counting of course the debts of the sharecropper); under renting the landowning class has increased its pressure and almost dissolved the system known as sharecropping. The system of renting has taken its place which produces more for the landlord and less for the tenant. The renter is obliged to pay a certain sum of money, which he must pay to the landlord regardless of his income or produce. Sharecropping is now mostly confined to tenants with the largest families—which are the negroes. This last point accounts for the large number of whites left stranded in favor of the large-family negroes, who thus suffer greater privation because they have more hands to put to work! The negro, it seems, has fallen from the "high standards" of pure sharecropping.

In his book, "Tenant Farmer", E. Caudwell says: "The real sufferer (in the cotton states) is the former sharecropper. Sharecropping, once the backbone of the Southern agricultural empire is rapidly giving way to an even more vicious system of labor extraction... the sharecropper of yesterday is the wage-worker of today, the man who peddles his brawn for 25 cents and 30 cents a day... the sharecroppers' place has been taken by the renter, who pays for the rent of the land whether there is anything left for himself or not." Thus many former sharecroppers are being proletarianized, and they may work one day a week, or even ten days a month; and if he happens to be one out of five he may qualify for relief work and earn \$5 or \$6 a week. Many are forced to live on a minimum of \$3.60 a week. And these relief workers are the aristocrats of Southern tenant labor!! The planter's preference for negro tenants is one of the most important factors in explaining why the rising tide of unemployment would bear most heavily against the white tenant. However we must point out that the figures themselves are many times misleading in considering the number of each strata. For example, if a tenant suffers the loss of a mule one year, he may revert back to the status of a sharecropper, the position of the various elements is very precarious—almost always leading from tenant to sharecropper to wage-labor. Many times sharecropping and wage labor are combined and the cropper tends to depend more and more upon the sale of his labor power for his livelihood.

However, when we say that the system of sharecropping is giving way to an even more vicious system of labor extraction, let it not be assumed that the sharecroppers have disappeared. The latter plus the tenants still number 42% of the farm population. What we are simply trying to prove is that the landowning class has found new methods of getting greater profits out of these elements: 1) by instituting a policy of renting, whereby the victor pays a stipulated sum regardless of his crop; 2) by hiring negroes with large families as against the whites, thus setting one against the other. All this has caused terrific chaos in the sharecropping group because many of them find themselves "cut" because of the above.

#### Tasks of the Sharecroppers

A hasty glance at the horrible conditions of the sharecroppers might tempt one to link them up with the feudal serf. What is the distinction?



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We must not allow the bad physical conditions to negate historical differences in periods and epochs. If the similarity were true then we must conclude, that on the agrarian-economic field history is moving backwards. Then the next logical step would have to be the reintroduction of capitalist relationships on land-for, on the above assumption, this would be progressive. But such is not the case. We must not forget that feudalism never existed in the U.S. If this point is kept in mind then the difference is clear. Sharecropping represents nothing less than a result of the general position of agriculture under the sway of finance capital in its decline stage. Sharecropping simply means that the majority of the farm population is slowly being proletarianized-from small owner to tenant to sharecropper to laborer, etc. This slow proletarianization simply adds additional elements to the overthrow of capitalist society, which in terms of objective pre-requisites, was already ripe for its overthrow years ago.

Linking this question up to the problems of the American revolution, we must draw the following conclusions: whereas for countries burdened with feudal remnants and which haven't had the opportunity to develop agriculture along healthy, organic, capitalist lines, the slogan of "land to the peasants" which thereby means to allow the peasants to function along capitalist agrarian lines, constitutes a step forward in economic relations. In America (as well as in other advanced countries where the proletarianization of the agrarian elements is taking place) the slogan of "land to the sharecroppers" or "land to the tenant farmers" can only signify a return to the crude, embryonic forms of capitalist agriculture, not only not signifying a step forward but a definite step backward. The slogan can only mean that we advocate a return of the semi-proletarian elements to the status of petty-bourgeoisie, thus creating a buffer layer between the capitalist class and the proletariat, eradicating the clear-cut class differentiations and the setting back of the proletarian revolution. The only possible historical progressive step forward consists of the socialization of the land on which the tenant-farmer and the sharecropper toil. Hence, while supporting such immediate demands as a bigger share of the crop for the sharecropper or less rent and taxes for the tenant, we can very well at appropriate moments, put forward among them the slogan of the socialization of these lands. This slogan is bound to find quick response since, they do not own the land on which they toil and by this time they have realized the futility of mortgaged farm holdings.

#### Farmer and Peasant

Facts and figures in and of themselves can, very many times, be misleading, or mean nothing at all. Most important is what one does with one's implements-they must be utilized correctly. Before we can consider the question of a farmers and workers alliance, certain terms must be clarified. Exactly whom do we mean by farmer and by peasant? Having in mind Russia before the Revolution, many people use the word peasant regardless of the economy of the particular country involved. Thus Russia, where agriculture accounted for a predominant part of the national economy is confused with such a country like the U.S., where in 1937 the farmers (i.e. the farm population) comprised 25% of the population and received less than 11% of the national income. In such a highly industrialized country like the U.S. agricultural exports as a whole were only 27% of the total exports of the country. As we have shown above, the farm population as a whole occupy a very small position in American imperialism and now are in a situation where their condition is not at all important towards the general prosperity (prosperity from the point of view of the capitalists of course). In Russia however the reverse was entirely true. Agriculture occupied a very important position in the general economy-the overwhelming percentage of the



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population was in agriculture and of this group the vast majority consisted of small peasants with small holdings. Therefore it was quite correct to say that the problem of the Russian Revolution was the problem of the peasantry. The entire affair hinged on whether the peasantry, comprising the vast majority of the population, could be won over to the side of the workers in the struggle against the landlord and the bourgeoisie.

In the U.S. however such is not the case. Of the South's farm families, 53% are tenants without land of their own. And of the other half that is ownership-operated, the average farm does not consist of a few acres (as in Russia) but holdings of a hundred and more acres is the tendency. Thus we learn that farms of 500 acres or more rose from 217,224 to 240,316 in 1937, and farms of 1000 acres or more rose from 67,405 to 80,620. Thus the tendency is for the larger holdings to get larger and the smaller ones to decrease or be wiped out by the big ones. We must not confuse the terms "farmer" and "peasant" and use them interchangeably. When we spoke of the peasant in Russia we meant practically everyone in agriculture except the landlord; this meant nearly everybody on the land and thus, the greatest majority in the nation.

But in the U.S. the term "farmer" has an entirely different meaning. Not only does it include the holders of farms of 500 and 1000 acres or more, but it also means the operators of small farms—practically everybody included under the term owner-operator. Why is this so? Haven't we pointed out the terrible plight of the farmers—won't this create a change in the ideology of the small farmers? When we answer this we must consider the farmers as still members of the rural petty-bourgeoisie who desire, above all else, to attain to the level of the large holders. Before he could consider unity with the proletariat he would ask himself what he has to gain. He knows that the proletariat in the long run won't give him the land and no matter how bad his conditions are he will still desire the present economy—in the hope that his holdings will increase, the crop be better and he'll receive better prices. The petty-bourgeois farmer will cling to this straw, no matter how thin, and will unite with the large farmers against the workers on this basis. And the large holder, who knows this, will utilize the false dreams of the small holders in a crisis. There will be talk of debt reductions, better prices, etc. Thus, no matter how bad off their condition the rural petty-bourgeoisie will tail-end the big holders in the hope that in the long run the big holders will reward them. It is the same with the urban petty-bourgeois who likewise follows his larger master and hopes for a reward when the battle is over. Actually however we know that when the master no longer needs his lackey he throws him out. Of course this does not automatically erase the possibility of many coming over to the side of the workers in the actual struggle. But we must understand that by farmer is meant not only the large holders but the small owner-operator, who ever looks sky-ward.

The tenant-farmers—especially the sharecroppers—are in a more or less semi-proletarian position. When we consider the strata we must not lose sight of the fact that it is very easy to pass from one group to another. As we stated above, the loss of a mule might mean the conversion of a tenant to a sharecropper. The latter are semi-proletarians in another sense—for many months of the year they work on governmental projects and they exist by the sale of their labor-power only. These distinctions must be clearly understood when we consider an alliance of the workers and farmers.



Keeping in mind the differentiations made above between farmer and peasant and of the various strata in the farm population, we must reject completely the slogan that calls for a workers and farmers alliance. In Russia the mass of the population consisted of peasants whose problem had to be solved. In order to make possible a revolution the small proletariat had to have them as allies. And the revolution was possible because of the fact that the workers realized that there were democratic tasks that were unsolved. Thus the dual struggle of the worker against the bourgeoisie and the peasant against the landlord combined into one fight-the workers and the peasants against the bourgeoisie and the landlords. The unsolved democratic tasks of the peasantry (the majority of the population) made such an alliance not only possible but mandatory. Realizing this we can understand how a revolution was possible with such a small proletariat. What can we say about the farmers in the U.S.-keeping in mind the fact that by farmers we do not mean the agricultural workers, the sharecroppers or the tenants?

When we consider such an alliance we must first see if any base of agreement exists. In other words, have the American farmers basic tasks which have not been solved and which the proletariat can only solve? Leaving out the fact that there will be many poor members of the farm population fighting with the workers, we must state that the American Revolution will be a one-class revolution.-in short there will be no such thing as a two class alliance. The petty-bourgeoisie as a class is reactionary; it does not seek the overthrow and destruction of the economic system but its preservation-to mold it so that it, the petty-bourgeoisie, can only also partake of its fruit. The petty-bourgeoisie can play a progressive role when united with the proletariat. Thus the question poses itself-why should the rural petty-bourgeoisie unite with the proletariat? The peasant united with the proletariat in Russia because they were promised land. But the peasants would prefer to join hands with the landlords if they would give them land. But in Russia, because of the predominant role of agriculture in the national economy, the ties of landlordism were too closely knit with the big bourgeoisie. Expropriation of the landlords' property would have been fatal to the big bourgeoisie and to the landlords. To give the peasant the land would have meant a complete break with landlordism. As a result, when the peasant discovered that the landlords, because of their indissoluble ties, could not give them the land, they marched with the proletariat against the landlords and the bourgeoisie. And so, we had a numerically weak proletariat overthrowing the capitalist system.

Have we in America unsolved agrarian tasks which will admit of the possibility of a workers and farmers alliance? When one links agrarian tasks with giving land, one might be tempted to say that the tasks are unsolved-what about the landless sharecroppers? The reason for this is to be found in the highly industrialized capitalist system prevailing, which reduced agriculture to a doomed field and in its wake slowly crushed the elements under neath. The answer is the proletarianization of many of the farm elements. The position of the petty-bourgeoisie under capitalism was best illustrated by Marx, when he said that capitalism is like a wedge in society-the further in it goes, the more does it crush everything in the middle while those on top go higher and those on bottom go lower. Thus the reason the sharecroppers have no land is because advanced America has long been ripe for the proletarian revolution. We do not advocate the return of the sharecroppers to the status of rural petty-bourgeoisie. We must move forwards the wheel of history-not help push it backwards.



Once again, in considering a workers and farmers alliance we must keep the strata of the farm population well in mind. The rural proletarians are not the farmers—they are of the same class as the workers in the city. The sharecroppers and the tenants in their precarious position are also not the farmers. They must be convinced that their only salvation lies with the workers. The only solution to the farm problem is a socialist one. The farmer does not fight for land—he received that a long time ago; what he wants are markets for his crops and better prices. The rural petty-bourgeoisie will not fight for the socialization of the land no matter how small their holdings and how bad their conditions. He'll fight with main and might to preserve the present economic system with the hope that he'll be rewarded. Although his holding is small and his conditions bad, with the big holder he sees a possibility of debt reductions, better prices, etc. The small holder sees only socialization of his land with the workers, and this makes him recoil with terror. The big holder will try everything to woo him because he knows that the small holder would rather have his small plot than a new society. After all is said and done he is still too much of a petty-bourgeois.

#### Farmer-Labor Party

From what we have just said the impossibility of a Farmer-Labor Party fighting against capitalism becomes obvious. Any such party precludes the possibility of an alliance between the two groups, which bubble we just burst. No matter what guise it may take, any such party will wind up as an ardent supporter of the present economic system. One however may point to the fights of the farmers in the past. It is true the farmers fought—but only against the railroads which took their land and which charged high rates. They never like the workers fought against the mining trusts as such. Their fight was always based on their own interests. The tremendous strikes and battles of labor are indelible proof of the fact that the workers did not fight one trust but the entire system of capitalist exploitation, which was organizing against them.

The best proof of how the farmers will fight was offered by the Hershey Strike. Here, the farmers, faced with the loss of their markets for milk, became the best agent of the bourgeoisie by actually organizing groups to physically break the strike! The American farmers want their markets and better prices. They are the most nationalistic group—what he wants is a good crop, a good price and a good markets. And if he organizes against the workers in one strike, what won't he do in a revolution??? No base for a workers and farmers alliance—no base for a workers and farmers party. Any Farmer-Labor Party will merely be another worthy agent and ardent enthusiast of the economic system existing.

#### The Government and the Tenant Farmers

The Bankhead Jones Farm Tenant Act provides for loans to be handed out by local committees composed of those controlling the ones who control the sharecroppers. H. Wallace in his 1937 report states: "Such a program cannot lift a large proportion of our tenant farmers to the ownership status". When we consider that 2 out of 5 are tenants and that farm tenancy increased from 1880-1935 at the rate of 33,465 farms a year we are inclined to agree. No—not many will be elevated to the ownership status. The social revolution against the combined force of capitalist exploitation is the only way out for these elements.

CLINTON



(11)

THE LAST APPEAL OF THE HUNGARIAN SOVIET GOVERNMENT TO THE WORKING CLASS OF HUNGARY

To the Working People of Hungary:

Comrades! Proletarians! - The international and the Hungarian counter-revolution are swooping down with grim fury upon the Hungarian Soviet Republic, the state of the poor and the workers, the destroyer of the dominion of capital, the constructor of Socialism.

The police force of the international counter-revolution of the capitalists, the Entente, has set its armed hordes upon us. The misled and terrorized mass of proletarians which has been welded to the slave-chains of the Roumanian boyars or forced to groan under the yoke of Czecho-Slovakian capitalists is stirring against us in order to drive the proletariat of Hungary back into that pool of misery, of bondage, and exploitation which the Dictatorship of the Proletariat has dried. On command of French, English, and American capitalists and Czech and Roumanian nationalists, Czecho-Slovakian, French, colored peasants and workers are attempting to force the liberated Hungarian proletariat once more under the yoke of the capitalists and oppressors. The attack which they are directing against the rule of the Hungarian proletariat purposes to re-establish the private ownership of the means of production.

They want to return the banks and hence the complete dominion over the economic life of the country to the money-kings.

They want to return to the stockholders their dividends and their unearned income and to turn the hard labor of the miner and the industry of the factory worker once more into a source of prosperity and ease for the idlers.

They want to give back all the means of production, the factory, the machine, the raw material, the transportation facilities, to the exploiters and once more set upon the workers' necks the boss, the director, the slave-driver.

They want to force the workers to pay the interest on the war loans and surrender a tithe out of the return from their labor to the drones the various rent-profiteers.

They want to reinstate the landlords whom the country people have driven out and to thrust the poor peasants, the small landholder, the squatter, the agricultural workers back into the condition of serfdom.

They want to put the confiscated money and jewels back into the hands of the rich so that they may be able to continue their luxurious, indolent, frivolous life which is a bane to society.

The house-rent usurers and the usurious dealers who without any necessity or cause have raised the price of every commodity - these they want to let loose once more upon the proletarian consumer, so that the value of his money may decrease still more. They want to reduce wages and increase the hours of labor, in short, whatever the revolution has built up in the way of Socialist institutions they want to tear down and distort.



The international counter-revolution aims to force upon us once more with armed might the dominion of private property, the strength of the capitalists, and it aims to drown in the blood of the workers that mighty work of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat, a work which has carried us amid a thousand dangers and sufferings but with giant stride toward the world of Socialism.

Under the protection of the international capitalistic counter-revolution preparations are being made to organize the Hungarian counter-revolution.

Under the protection of the Roumanian and Czecho-Slovakian army of occupation the great Hungarian patriots have gathered to lay waste the Hungarian land with the force of arms. In Arad the landlords, the capitalists, and their beholden retinue of bourgeois politicians have established an opposing government. Like the Russian leaders of 1849, so today the representatives of the ruling classes are clearing the way for the present hostile invasion. They are trying to organize a white guard for the white government. The justices of the peace, the notaries, the little autocrats of the comitats, the former congressional representatives of privileges, the grafters, who have been deprived of their business, the bankrupt adventurers, all the derelicts of the worn-out and overthrown political parties, finding support in the Roumanian and French arms are preparing to revive the class government of tyranny and oppression, they are organizing to wrest the political power from the poor workers and peasants and to entrust it again to those mercenary oppressors and politicians, to those classes whom only the storm of two revolutions was able to shake out of their political seats of power.

The Dictatorship of the Proletariat as transition stage of the state to Socialism - that is the watchword of the Hungarian Soviet Republic.

The dictatorship of the oppressors and exploiters as a permanent form of government - that is the emblem of the counter-revolution.

In the factories, in the fields, in the offices, all power to belong to the workers, the producers - that is the significance of our red banner.

All authority vested in the landlord, the manufacturer, the banker, the bishop - that is the motto which sullies the white flag of our opponents.

The preparing and establishing of Socialism - that is the purpose and the reason for existence of the Soviet Republic.

The vain attempt to revive capitalism - that is the economic program of the counter-revolution.

Hence it is not a war, whose furies are now being loosed upon us, even though it is being conducted by the force of arms, but an armed class struggle which Hungarian and International capitalism is carrying on against the proletariat of Hungary, the advance guard of the world revolution. This conflict is the struggle for the existence and development of the working class, a life and death struggle which will mean



the realization or the overthrow of Socialism, and every proletarian is a traitor to himself, a traitor to his class, a traitor to the sacred cause of the social world revolution, a traitor to the world-redeeming idea of Socialism, who does not now with all his readiness to sacrifice, with all his energy, with all his courage, his life and limb, his work, his manhood, stand by the endangered revolution, the besieged Dictatorship of the Proletariat, the hard-pressed cause of Socialism;

The organized workers of Budapest are at this moment at the front holding over the dominion of the proletariat a shield made of their own living bodies. The pick of the workers have taken up arms in order, even at the cost of their lives, to defend the great idea of the rule of the workers, to protect the cause of the social world revolution from any reverse,

"We believe that the great energies of Socialism poured forth in an inexhaustible stream will render this Red Army, which is fighting the class struggle of the workers against the hordes of the exploiters and oppressors, invincible. But this struggle necessitates the work, the sacrifices of the workers and poor peasantry of the whole country! We, therefore, call all proletarians, the workers of city and village, all the adherents of outraged Poverty demanding power, to arms. We call upon the proletariat of the occupied districts to prevent with all lawful and unlawful means, with all methods of open and underground warfare, the organization of the white counter-revolution and to fight with every weapon of individual and mass action against all counter-revolutionary classes, groups, and individuals! We call upon every proletarian of the occupied districts to obstruct by means of sabotage the war which the international and Hungarian capitalists are waging against the Hungarian Revolutionary Soviet Republic, against the rule of the toiling masses of the poor.

But let the capitalists and the counter-revolutionists heed the following:

The cause of the Proletariat, of the social revolution cannot fall, in fact it is obviously making strides the world over. And the forces of the proletariat will advance to the points where at this moment the counter-revolutionists are hiding under cover of the arms of the imperialistic conquerors, and then our settlement with those who introduced armed civil war against the rule of the proletariat will be merciless and unsparing! But until we are able to extend the power of the proletariat to those districts which have been wrested from us, we owe it\*to our own principles, and the obligation which we have assumed toward the world revolution, to work with all our might to destroy root and branch the economic system of capitalism and the state based upon oppression and force, and out of the constructive forces of Socialism to rebuild and perfect it as much as possible in the triumphant, indomitable spirit of the Dictatorship of the Proletariat:

Long live the International Socialist World Revolution!

Long live the Dictatorship of the Proletariat!

Long live the Hungarian Soviet Republic!

\* Omitted - Insert: -

...to our proletarian brothers at the front,...

THE REVOLUTIONARY SOVIET GOVERNMENT.

THE HUNGARIAN SOCIALIST PARTY.

(The Class Struggle, August, 1919)



In keeping with the editorial policy of the "Spark" we invite polemics from opponent organizations. In this issue there appears an article by comrade Mienov - "The Party and the Proletariat" - which is a polemic directed principally against the tendency that centers around the magazine "International Review", the Libertarian organ, "The Vanguard" and "Living Marxism", theoretical organ of the Council Communists. Should any of these organizations care to reply to this article, the pages of the "Spark" are open to them.

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## THE PARTY AND THE PROLETARIAT

### Introduction

Queries have been directed at us, from many sources, by workers who desired to know the stand of our organization with regard to the Leninist position on the Party. These questions have come principally from people who cannot understand how it is that we can refuse to label the Russian state "proletarian" in character and yet adhere to the basic principles of Leninism. Stalinism, in their eyes, represents nothing else than the continued march of Leninism. In their haste to prove their argument, they have especially picked out the Leninist position on the Party as offering the best corroboration of its synonymity with Stalinism. Aside from the Anarchists who throw only vulgar epithets at Leninism, the "International Review" seems to be in the vanguard of the forces which aim to prove, theoretically, that the Party-vanguard concept of Lenin was just what caused the degeneration of the Russian revolution. The magazine, "Living Marxism" of the Council Communists seems to have derived its name by prepropagating the death of the original Marxian concept which argued for the necessity of a vanguard party.

This article, therefore, had to be changed to serve three purposes. Whereas originally the author only intended to take up the relation of the Party to the proletariat in a general theoretical light, the confusion engendered by the above-mentioned tendencies made it necessary to review the Leninist polemic against the Russian Economists, which serves very well as a polemic against the "Economists" of our day, i.e., the above-mentioned tendencies, in order best to illustrate what is meant by a "Leninist Party position". Secondly, the article had, of necessity, to treat with the relation of the Bolshevik Party to the proletariat in the Russian revolution. We think this the best method of combatting the oft-made attempt to link up the Leninist Party position with the dead corpse of October.

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I

The degeneration of the Russian revolution has resurrected many a struggle which preceded the revolution. It is strange that after a lapse of more than a decade since internal differences shook the revolutionary movement in Tsarist Russia, the revolution should have come and gone and we be still debating the same problems which the year 1917 should have settled once and for all. That only goes to prove that the divergencies of opinion which then prevailed were of a deep rooted character and that such differences will remain alive until capitalism has been ended.



The "International Review" and Co. point to present day Russia as offering a vindication of the correctness of their long held anti-Bolshevik view. Martov has been resurrected, his polemic against Lenin's "State and Revolution" translated into English and the crusade against Bolshevism is on in full force. Here and there Rosa Luxemburg's views are given wide currency (which they well deserve)--all to prove : that there is no necessity for a political Party which will act as the vanguard of the working class. It would be well for these critics of Bolshevism to cease borrowing from none too sympathetic authors. They would do better if they unlocked the keys to their own arsenals, dug up some of the old, rusty sheets of the Russian Economists papers and periodicals and showed to the world that even prior to their "theoretical" exposures of Bolshevism there were people who, without the need of a totalitarian Stalin to open their eyes, were already attacking the theoretical premises of Bolshevism and were presenting the basic political concepts which our latest critics are now reformulating.

The question which had its importance then, and still deserves primary consideration, relates to the role of consciousness in historical development. The Economists maintained then as our Bolshevik critics maintain now that:

- (1) spontaneously the working class gravitates towards socialism.
- (2) the injection of the bacilli of revolutionary ideology by a political party of the working class is unnecessary since politics always follows economics.
- (3) the working class by its economic struggle against the capitalists reaches spontaneously that socialist consciousness which enables it to overthrow bourgeois society.

From these false premises follow two logical conclusions: first that the economic struggle is primary, basic. Secondly, that the building of a vanguard political party is unnecessary, in fact only serves to keep the working class in the tow of a few leaders who will utilize them for their individual purposes. Nevertheless, when forced to recognize that there existed a political struggle, the Economists indulged in lip service to political propaganda by declaring that: "political agitation must be the superstructure to the agitation carried on in favor of the economic struggle."

In summing up the viewpoint of the Economists, Lenin attacked them principally for "their conviction that it is possible to develop the class political consciousness of the workers from within, that is to say, exclusively, or at least mainly, by means of economic struggle." In fighting against their formula of "giving the economic struggle a political character", which, translated into action, meant using political agitation to fulfill the economic demands, Lenin, quite correctly, pointed out that the economic struggle of the workers is very often connected with bourgeois politics. In fact, the mere realization that the workers have not advanced beyond trade union organization only proved to Lenin that bourgeois ideology still dominated them. The road he pointed out was not for mere indulgence in political activity to fulfill the economic demands as formulated by a pure and simple trade unionist engaged in trade union politics, that is, bourgeois reformist politics. Lenin strove to elevate the economic struggles to the higher forms of struggles, to the political battles; not to use politics as a lever for the realization of the economic demands but to capture state power. For that purpose the form of organization to lead in the struggle could only be the Political Party.



The above views, for the information of our anti-Bolshevik critics, not only constitute the Leninist position but also the Marxist position. It would be well that this "new labor tendency" as our friend critics label themselves, (especially the authors of the "International Review" and "Living Marxism" in America and the "Revolutions Proletarienne" in France) would also polemicize against Marx' writings on the Party question as they love to do against Lenin's. Or must we conclude from this that the crusaders against Bolshevism prefer to quietly disassociate themselves from Marx' writings under the cover of a barrage against Leninism?

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Lenin strove to adapt the Marxist position on the Party to the specific Russian requirements. In adhering to his basic concepts, we, not being dogmatists, do not have to accept his membership-organization idea, an error he committed, which though not of magnitude importance, (nevertheless important) could have only been made in view of the peculiar economic and political conditions then prevalent in Russia.

Faced with a wide espionage system on the part of the Tsarist regime, a well organized police system which arrested daily hundreds of revolutionists and thus destroyed the organizational apparatus they had built up, Lenin, strove to create a well knit secret Party structure which would very well stand match to the police set up. This organizational structure which he proposed led to the discarding of the erroneous Economist view on organization. A realist, he saw the necessity of coordinating the work of the then existing Social-Democratic circles, of putting an end to the interrupted character of work which, because of police arrests, was characteristic of the radical movement. He strove to give it a continuity of action. That could only be accomplished, not by Economist phrases of a spontaneous action of the working class which supposedly would legalize the Russian radical movement, but by counterposing consciousness to spontaneity, by giving the spontaneous movement a head, a leadership which could point the way and lead this movement to correct channels of struggle. This leadership had of necessity to consist of trained revolutionists, or as Lenin put it, "wise men" who could avoid arrest.

Answering the objections of his critics that his proposals to appoint District leaders and coordinate the secret work in the central committee of "ten wise men" was undemocratic, Lenin replied that, from a formal standpoint the accusation was correct. But "is it possible", he asked, "for all the revolutionists to elect one of their number to any particular office when in the very interest of the work, he must conceal his identity from nine out of ten of these 'all' "? Broad democracy in party organization, amidst the gloom of autocracy and the domination of gendarmes, he held to be nothing more than a useless and harmful toy, since under such conditions no revolutionary organization ever did or ever could practice this broad principle.

That on this point Lenin was correct, only people to whom the subject factor, the organization of revolutionists into a Party, plays no part in making history, will take issue. We must, however, take issue with Lenin's concept of membership in Party organization. Lenin, as it is very little known in "Leninist Circles", stood for a Russian Social-Democratic Party which was to be composed "chiefly of persons engaged in revolution as a profession." Again we must emphasize that this membership-organizational concept he did not hold applicable for other



countries. Speaking about the German Social-Democratic Party he, quite lightly sanctioned the paragraph which stated: "Membership of the Party is open to those who accept the principles of the party programme, and render all the support they can to the party". Lenin's error can be and must be explained. But it cannot be explained the way the "left" critics explain it: that Lenin was interested in building a Jacobin party and therefore desired only the bourgeois intellectual element as Party members. Quite the contrary. Lenin sought ways and means by which to take the untrained worker elements and elevate them to the position of professional revolutionists. Conversely he demanded of the intellectual party leaders that they make contact with the workers in order to solidify the bond between the professional revolutionists and the working class. In his task of creating a party of the working class, Lenin, however, was overwhelmed by objective factors which contributed to his error on the mentioned question. There was the small working class which was just arriving at elementary trade union consciousness and which as yet did not possess that training and socialist consciousness deemed essential to build a Party. On the other hand the student intelligentsia was already attaining to socialist consciousness and was ready to give leadership to the working class. Confronted with the necessity of an immediate organization of a Social-Democratic Workers Party, Lenin refused to wait for that day when the working class, of itself, "spontaneously", would attain to socialist consciousness. Thus, it can be seen, it was the existence of the above mentioned condition, the lack of socialist development on the part of the workers and the readiness on the part of the intelligentsia to throw itself into battle against absolutism, that led Lenin to the erroneous conclusion. It must be emphasized, however, that whereas Lenin on paper declared himself for a party composed chiefly of professional revolutionists, in action he corrected himself by following another road. The Bolshevik Party, prior the revolution, became rooted in the masses, resulting in the domination of proletarian elements in its organic composition.

## II

The question at hand is the relation of the Party towards the seizure of power by the proletariat. We have said that the Party leads the proletariat towards the seizure of power. Does this signify that the Party seizes the power and concentrates it in its hand for the proletariat? This question, having been debated during the actual progress of the Russian Revolution, is reaching wider polemical heights as a result of the degeneration of October.

Lenin objected to having the question posed: dictatorship of the proletariat or dictatorship of the Party. Posed in such a manner, the axis of debate shifted from economics and class domination to the bourgeois concept of "democracy vs. dictatorship", which prevents an economic interpretation of history. Such a manner of putting the question would today also play into the hands of those "left" anti-Bolsheviks and anarchists, who give as the chief cause for the degeneration of the Russian Revolution the fact that the power was concentrated in the hands of the Bolshevik Party instead of the class. Thus they fail to see that the degeneration of October was not a result of the one Party regime as such, but that the substitution of the workers organs with Party control was only a phenomenon which had its origin in the economic structure of Russia, in the backwardness of the nation, making it impossible for the small proletariat, without the aid of the world revolution, to overcome the usurpation of power.



Lenin did not seek to abolish the powers of the Soviets in order to substitute them with the Party organization. The fact remains that he fought against such attempts. Understanding that the cry against Bolshevik control of the Soviets was only a strategem which the counter-revolutionary parties hoped to impose their control, Lenin sought to retain the Soviet organs and lead them away from the influence of the Menshevik-Social Revolutionary-Anarchist leadership.

"The functions of the party collective must in no case be confounded with the powers of the state organs, such as are the Soviets. Such a confusion would yield disastrous results, particularly in the military field. The Party endeavors to direct the activity of the Soviets but not to replace them."

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Nobody who is a Marxist would at all attempt to deny that the shift of power from the hands of the Soviets into the Bolshevik Party organization acted as a contributing factor in the degeneration of October. All, however, are forgetting that this occurrence, or this bureaucratization, was not a result of the strength of the workers' republic but its weakness. The three years of fierce struggle demanded on the part of the proletariat initiative, decisive decisions, drastic measures. The Russian proletariat was numerically small, its hold upon the economy, because of the lack of industrialization, not significantly great. This expressed itself in the impossibility of the proletariat to create powerful organs of power of its own which could dominate the national political life. The Soviets, erroneously pictured as working class organs of power, contained a preponderance of peasant elements. (only those Soviets in which the proletariat was the dominant numerical force represented working class organs of power. The All Union Congress of Soviets which represented the Soviets as a whole, contained a preponderance of peasant elements and could not be considered an organ of proletarian power) It was no accident that Lenin, before the seizure of power, pointed to the Soviets as expressing in the clearest form the old Bolshevik concept of the "democratic dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry". Such being the case, the only real organ through which the proletariat could express its class domination was the Bolshevik Party. In that sense it could be said that the working class dictatorship became realizable by means of the dictatorship of the Bolshevik Party.

Such a phenomenon presented two contradictory aspects. Whereas on one hand the concentration of power into the hands of the Party made possible the expression of the working class domination over the peasantry, since by means of democratically elected Soviets, the petty-bourgeois rural element would have dominated the Soviets, on the other hand this Party control of power termed by Lenin, "a workers state with bureaucratic distortions" contained within it the germs of the destruction of the proletarian rule.

The October revolution, we have said was a proletarian revolution made by two different classes, the working class and the peasantry. For such a revolution, occurring in a country predominantly peasantry, to deliver the control of the political power to the proletariat, had necessarily to mean the use of undemocratic means by the proletariat to obtain the power. The Soviets, however, at the time of the seizure of power, elected democratically, expressed in the main the voice of the peasantry. The slogan of all power to the Soviets, if carried out into practice, could have only meant power to the peasantry, a class unable to wield it. This dilemma made necessary the stepping into the picture of the Bolshevik Party, representing the historical interests of the proletariat, to seize the power for the proletariat. The Russian proletariat, being



so weak was not able to seize power by means of the Soviets, since its numerical position would not allow it to dominate the Soviets. The Bolshevik Party became the organ through which the proletariat seized power.

It is complained that the Bolshevik Party was undemocratic in substituting its power for the power of the Soviets. It could not have acted otherwise and yet put the peasantry in a subordinate position. Those who doubt the proletarian nature of the Bolshevik Party, or rather those who refuse to believe that the Bolshevik Party expressed the historical interests of the proletariat—how explain the Leninist Constitution which deprived the peasantry an equal vote with the working class? (one workers' vote counted three peasant votes) This act, an undemocratic one, accomplished by the dictatorial hand of the Bolshevik Party, nevertheless, benefited the working class. Would the vulgar anarchists, whose criterion for determining the character of a government is based on the petty bourgeois measure of whether the regime is "authoritarian or libertarian" have declared themselves against this act which usurped the Soviet's power but which nevertheless strengthened the hands of the proletariat?

It is interesting to study the resolution of the Kronstadt sailors whose revolt in 1921 is singled out today by our anti-Bolshevik critics as a manifestation of a left reaction to the "state capitalist policies of the Bolshevik dictatorship". The suppression of the Kronstadt rebellion was a logical step in the preparation of the Bolshevik regime for the introduction of right wing policies, including the NEP, so claim our friend critics. But a careful examination of the Kronstadt resolution indicates that the insurgents were the very ones who protested against the extreme socialistic economic measures policies of the government and who demanded nothing shorter than a NEP.

The Kronstadt sailors' resolution, despite all the talk about free elected Soviets, democracy, protests against Bolshevik authoritarianism, contains two basic points which form the heart of the document. Exhibiting the peasant influence (the peasantry protested against the forced requisition of grain, since it thereby liquidated speculation and profiteering) the Kronstadt resolution demanded: "To give the peasants the right to work their land as they desire, as well as their cattle..." This point could only be interpreted one way— to allow the peasants to function on capitalist agricultural relationships. Point 15 is far more clear in its championing of petty-bourgeois interests.

"Authorize the free production of artisans, without the employment of salaried workers."

The Bolsheviks attempted to eliminate petty-bourgeois production but were not able to. In that sense they were forced to tolerate it. Only when forced to the wall did they finally permit it. But for the anarchists and "left" communists to attack the NEP as representing the true policy of Bolshevism only to later praise a resolution which proposed the same changes Bolshevism advocated, is certainly inconsistent.

We bring up the Kronstadt affair to show that even those Soviets which staged a fight against Bolshevism from the "left" did not in reality express the proletarian interests but represented the pressure of the petty-bourgeoisie against the extreme socialistic measures of the Bolshevik Party. Through the revolutionary content of the Bolshevik Party the Russian proletariat expressed its class domination. When the Party, in whose hands the power lay, was stripped of its revolutionary content, the main obstacle in the destruction of the revolution was overcome.



When after the Civil War and intervention, the time arrived for the extension of workers democracy, for the vesting of power into the proletarian mass bodies, the task proved too hard. The small working class, whose numerical strength made it impossible to dominate the economy, was incapable of dictating to the then already formed bureaucracy, which, supported by economic conditions favorable to it (the state capitalism of the NEP) was not only reluctant of giving up what it had but stretched out its hands for ever greater limitation of workers' power. The concentration of power into the hands of the Party was already beginning to exhibit its negative aspects. It could be said, however, that only under the new economic conditions made favorable for the growth of a bureaucracy (the introduction of the NEP) was the return to a workers democracy made impossible. Only the international revolution could have prevented the degeneration of October. The Russian Revolution was considered to be used merely as a springboard for world revolution, as a signal for the world's oppressed to revolt. When the world revolution for which October was intended, failed, the latter also had to fail.

Thus the concentration of power into the hands of the Party was not the cause of the degeneration of the Revolution but only the result of certain objective conditions which made this degeneration possible and which also made this concentration of power possible. If the criterion for determining the character of a government are its acts, in whose interests it functions, then the term, "Party dictatorship" when used in describing the regime under Lenin must be rejected as incorrect. For the "Party dictatorship" under Lenin was nothing else than a "workers state with bureaucratic distortions", as Lenin himself termed it. That is, the "Party dictatorship" expressed only the "bureaucratic distortions" and could not in any sense be considered a state functioning against the interests of the proletariat. Only when these "bureaucratic distortions" grew and multiplied did it produce a qualitative change, the transformation of the bureaucracy into a ruling class- the death of the workers state.

In discussing the relation between the Party and the class there is one lesson which must be derived from the Russian Revolution. Namely it is this: that whereas concentration of power in the hands of the Party does not in itself signify a destruction of the proletarian regime, but may even be a measure necessary to save the regime, such an act nevertheless carries with it the germs of bureaucratization, germs which constitute threats to the workers state.

### III

The workers as a class do not reach socialist consciousness at the same time; they reach their destination not as one single army but as component, separated detachments. Certain sections of the proletariat have come to the realization of their historical task. The duty of those advanced elements is to organize themselves as a detachment, a Party and point the way to the class as a whole. It must be said that without the pointing of the way by this advanced section of the proletariat vanguard, the working class will never establish firmly its rule. It is not the Party, however, which makes the revolution but the proletariat as a whole led by the Party.

The necessity to guide and to lead the workers towards the revolution arises out of the fact that the tempo of ideological development un-



capitalism is not an even one for all workers. The outbreak of the revolution can at times signify that the proletariat as a class is only approaching socialist consciousness, or has only developed the first elements of revolutionary ideology. There have been cases in history where the proletariat entered into battle against the capitalist state, as in Spain 1936, but lacked that full socialist consciousness which would enable it to free itself from the agents of the bourgeoisie and proceed to smash the capitalist state. So even during the revolution itself it is necessary to inject into the working class that revolutionary consciousness which will enable it to emerge victoriously in its battle against the class enemy. Having, however, reached that high political development which enables the working class to overthrow the bourgeois state, there is no reason in the world why the power of the state cannot be concentrated in the proletariat as a whole.

The dictatorship of the proletariat can only proceed with the participation of the workers as a whole in the administering of all economic and political power. In advocating the slogan of "all power to the workers councils" we do not use it as a hollow phrase, stripped of content and applied simply for decorative purposes. We mean what we say. We mean control from the bottom, power to be actually vested in the hands of the workers' councils. In short, the dictatorship of the proletariat cannot be construed to mean a dictatorship for the proletariat, in which case the working class itself is made out too ignorant to rule but must of necessity have benevolent intellectuals who have sworn under oath not to turn the machinery of state against the proletariat. Having reached that high political development which enables the proletariat to overthrow the bourgeoisie, the task of actively participating in administering the already conquered state power should in fact prove easier, since the newly established economic and political foundations do not impose upon the working class capitalist ideology, as would be the case under capitalist economic relationships, but socialist. In other words, the existence of capitalism imposes upon the working class unconsciously, in diverse forms, capitalist ideology. With the introduction of socialist economical relationships comes a higher development of socialist ideology than the workers could have possibly hoped to acquire prior to the revolution, making the proletariat cognizant of their historical role and thus making actual control of power by the workers a simple, elementary task.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, contrary to widely held beliefs, is not a restriction of democracy but a further extension of it. It is in fact the only genuine form of democracy which humanity has ever realized. But like every form of a state it represents a dictatorship of one class over another. Suppression of bourgeois privileges will have to be made. For the first time in history, the force of the majority of the population, the proletariat, will be used against a minority which insists on exploiting society. But this progress towards socialism can only be made if the participation of the proletariat as a whole in the management of the political and economic life is undertaken during the transitional epoch.

The political party does not disappear with the conquest of power, for the simple reason that classes do not immediately disappear. If the mere concentration of power in the hands of the proletariat would be sufficient enough to guarantee a smooth, unperturbed development towards socialism, then obviously there would be no need for the further existence of a vanguard organization once the proletariat overthrew capita-



lism. With the existence of antagonistic classes, there exists also a struggle, obstacles, possibilities of a return to capitalism. No smooth development is guaranteed. While on one hand we insist on placing all power into the hands of the proletarian mass organs, since every strengthening of the workers' self initiative only goes to weaken the enemies of socialism, the Marxist Party, on the other hand, having a clearer foresight of events than the workers as a mass possess, must continue its independent existence, help them fight off every dangerous move advocated by other political currents which aim to undermine the existence of workers rule.

The form of inter-relationship between the proletariat and its vanguard after the seizure of power does not depend on the wishes of the former or the latter alone. It is in the main decided by the state of economic development. One of the chief reasons for the ever increasing independence of the Bolshevik Party from the class was the smallness, numerically of the latter, its low cultural and social development which in turn reflected the backwardness of the country. The Russian proletariat was not able to impose its will on the Bolshevik Party, since the former, numerically weak, could not create such mass organs of power of its own which would be capable of dominating by mere numerical preponderance, the political life of the country and thus force the Party back to its correct road. This tended to create an ever widening gulf between the Party and the proletariat, leading finally to a crystallization of a special bureaucratic layer within the Bolshevik Party, which usurped and finally expropriated the proletariat of political power. There were times, however, when the low cultural and social development of the Russian proletariat prevented it from seeing its correct needs, forcing the Bolshevik Party to pit itself against the popular wishes of the working class only to carry out their best historical interests.

Hence when we declare for the development of the self initiative of the workers, for the complete transference of power into their hands, thus delegating to the Party a guiding role after the overthrow of capitalism, we are not spontaneity-ites who declare that at all times the working class, unconsciously, always does the right thing. For if that were the case there would not only be no need for a vanguard before the seizure of power, much less after. Therefore even after the seizure of power, we see how it might become necessary to combat the spontaneous erroneous view of the mass as a whole with the consciousness of the Party.

.....  
An insight into the coming American revolution offers us the optimistic view that, once the revolution succeeds, it will not share the same fate as the Russian. Whereas Kautsky was quite correct in stating that modern socialism originated out of the heads of members of the bourgeois intelligentsia, whereas Lenin only observed a fact which held true for Russia when he declared that, "The intellectuals are good at solving questions 'of principle'...drafting plans and supervising the execution of plans... The workers busy themselves with the application of gray theory in living practice", nevertheless, in observing the high industrial and as a result cultural and social development of the American proletariat we are quite confident that not only will they occupy themselves with the application of "gray theory" but will also be the very ones who will formulate the deep theoretical points. There are millions of American intellectuals who have acquired a high education and have been forced to earn livelihood through ma-



(25)  
labor. And then again there are countless thousands who never had a higher education but who, living in a highly advanced cultural society, have felt the general effects of advanced American life and who are quite capable of participating in the solution of theoretical questions.

From these objective conditions flow different relationships between the Party and the class. Firstly, the Party will become more closely knit to the class in the sense that it will be not only a proletarian party in programmatic declaration but also in organic composition. Secondly, a leading role in formulating questions of policies will not only be played by the intellectuals but by worker elements. Lastly and most important, with the seizure of power, we can conceive of no gulf between the vanguard and the mass unlike the condition that existed in Russia. While the vanguard, even after the seizure of power, will be able to point out the road ahead to the mass, the mass, being so advanced will only follow a road which leads to a strengthening of its position, its power, its class domination. This high advanced position of the American workers will act as an asset should the very Party which led them to success degenerate and attempt to lead them backwards to capitalism.

Karl Mienov  
October 27, 1938



# ~ANNOUNCEMENTS~

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Every Tuesday Nite - 8:30 p.m.

Glass in "Das Kapital" - Vol. 1 - Comrade Byrke  
Admission Free at 84 E. 10<sup>TH</sup> St. NYC

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FRI. - Nov. 18 - 8:30 p.m. "European War Situation"

Adm. Free - 84 E. 10<sup>TH</sup> St. NYC - Comrade Stanford

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Fri. Nov. 25 - 8:30 p.m. "Symposium on Russia"

Adm. FREE - 84 E. 10<sup>TH</sup> St.

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Fri. Dec. 2 - 8:30 p.m. "Labor Party Question"

Adm. Free - 84 E. 10<sup>TH</sup> St. Comrade Phillip

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Visit Our Hdq. - 84 E. 10<sup>TH</sup> St.  
Communicate to N.Y.C.



Unemployment arises out of capitalist relationships where goods are produced predominantly for profits and not for use. Unemployment was prevalent in pre-capitalist times but in general was not so widespread because of the absence of the economic crises so peculiar to the capitalist mode of production. The deeper the crises -and as capitalism continues to decay they occur more frequently and with greater intensity- the more important becomes the question of answering the problems of the unemployed. Because capitalism has had its heyday, has passed its zenith, and is now well on the downgrade, as can be witnessed by the manifestations of the acuteness of capitalist crises- wars, fascism, mass discontent in forms of strikes etc. -, the permanent character of the unemployed problem becomes a reality even to the skeptical. Even capitalist theorists understand that the unemployment problem can never be solved under the system they still continue to defend- a system where goods are produced for profit, where the machine has displaced the worker, and as far as the capitalist system is concerned, left him as a superfluous factor to be granted a mere pittance from the state, to be used to drive down the wages of those workers still employed, and to be used as a tool of fascism, war drives for new markets etc. They begin to understand what Marxists long ago pointed out- namely, that the breathing space between capitalist crises becomes shortened and that unemployment becomes a permanent feature in society to relieved temporarily by artificial stimuli injected at a costly price into the ever decaying body of capitalism. Inflation, wars, and fascism are the costly stimulants. Since unemployment expresses in the most open fashion the inability of capitalism to solve even the most elementary needs of the masses, since the problem that it poses cannot be solved within the framework of capitalism itself, and since the immediate demands for the unemployed can be only to better their conditions as unemployed, the main demand becomes the maximum demand- the overthrow of capitalism. To shout, "Open up the Factories", "Work or Wages", or to demand work in any other form would be incorrect. The primary reason that we oppose the aforementioned slogans and others of similar content, is that the demand of capitalism that we, the workers, desire to slave under their wage system. It asks of capitalism that we, the workers, should be given the opportunity of working on the old basis- where the boss exploits. Instead of this, the workers should demand unemployment insurance and take the offensive in this action, instead of demanding to slave under the old conditions. The incorrect slogans mentioned above plead to the boss to "allow" workers to be exploited, permits the boss to dictate, and contains the elements of proletarian subservience to boss rule. Never must the unemployed allow the boss to take the offensive. They must demand to be supported by the capitalist state- through unemployment insurance. Also it tends to give the illusion that capitalism is capable of rehiring the unemployed and that capitalism can be "forced" to grant work to the unemployed under the prevailing, bankrupt system.

As regards the general problem of the unemployed we must state it in a clear-cut fashion. We must point out to the unemployed that their predicament is an outcome of the capitalist system and that, unfortunately, there is no solution for them as regards their re-employment under capitalism, but that their only hope lies in the dictatorship of the proletariat. Their attacks upon capitalism, because they have no direct contact upon the economic field, must be predominantly of a political nature. Their protests against the capitalist state must not be voiced in uncertain terms but must demand and not beg a dole. Because capitalism will never be able to provide enough for the great number of unemployed, the latter will find



themselves more and more in the front ranks of the proletariat struggling against the capitalist state, and calling for its overthrow. The demands of the unemployed must be fought for in the streets, where they will come into direct conflict with the brutal open oppression of the state, where their demands will take on concrete action of struggle against their enemies and where they can take the initiative of the entire proletariat in dealing blows to the state. The unemployed have no job to protect or lose. They are apt to be more extreme in their demands and must be so recognized by the party of the proletariat. Their overlord is the state. The oppressor of the unemployed is not an isolated boss who is a unit of the latter's dictatorship over all the proletariat, but the political state, the dictatorship. It is understood that the mass discontent of this "superfluous" layer in society can be very effective if it is utilized correctly.

Flowing from the above points it can readily be seen how important it is to organize the unemployed into an unemployed organization which we may call the Unemployed Union. It is true that those workers who are laid off for a short time may desire to remain in their original work union. However, those workers who are unemployed for a lengthy period do not feel like employed workers any more and must then be organized into an Unemployed Union. The Union must not only include workers who are totally unemployed but, likewise WPA workers, who must be made to understand their status. There must be an interchange of representatives of the Unemployed Union with various unions of employed workers to cooperate on various issues (mentioned later). Regular meetings must be held. In this way the solidarity between the unemployed and employed can become a reality in action.

The Unemployed Union must not be an organization of a Workers Alliance type which includes dominantly, the bribed section of the unemployed- that section which fights to remain vassals of the state permanently, which does not carry on militant struggles on the streets but revolves its activity on the axis of petitioning the capitalist state. The Unemployed Union must be what its name implies; a union with a wide unemployed base. All unemployed are asked to join, regardless of political affiliations. The militancy of the unemployed, organized in this manner may then be pretty certain, for the mass of the unemployed- the great section which the capitalist class cannot bribe are more apt to be extreme in their demands. They are the ones that will lead hunger strikes, mass demonstrations on the streets, etc. This is the section of the unemployed who cannot tolerate "sugar words" for food- their desperate conditions make them heed the word of action. It will be most difficult for the reformists to lead such a union- they will not be so easily able to tie the workers to the capitalist kite.

The unemployed question, since it is so important in the highly industrialized countries as the United States, Britain etc. makes it totally necessary for the unemployed to be organized into an Unemployed Union. The workers in this union will be likely to be the most militant among the proletariat in struggling against capitalism. Especially in such a country like the United States the forcefulness of the large number of the unemployed will be felt. We may say that the unemployed workers represent about 1/4 of the employable workers in the United States. Of course the unemployed cannot exert the pressure that workers employed



Independence? Has the rather uncereceremonious expulsion of these eternal reformers left no impression on their inner crannial tissue? Apparently not. For there follows the words:

"Whenever (?) the revolutionists find themselves in a Labor Party..." After solemnly "condemning" the Labor party, after significantly stressing only the "programmatic independence" of the party, the line is laid down for "whenever the revolutionists find themselves in a Labor Party" which means opening the gates wide for the SWP's entrance into a Labor Party. But some will object- why can't individual revolutionists enter a Labor Party? We take no issue with that concept- the entrance of party members into a reformist or centrist outfit to break elements from these parties and bring them over to the independent vanguard. But this can only be done with revolutionists working within the other organizations coincidentally with the crystallization of issues by the independent organization on the outside. Without the reciprocal and coordinating effort from the outside- the independence of the party organizationally and politically- to speak of working within a party or "whenever revolutionists find themselves in a Labor party" becomes a sham. The very fact that the SWP does not make the distinction between sending in certain members for opponents' activity while the party is organizationally independent, makes clear the intent of the centrist tone which is manifest in every important question in the program! A centrist has need to write vaguely- he needs elbow room in which to capitulate to a number of things, retaining as revolutionary only phrases.

And to indicate the proximity of the Trotskyites to the Labor Party: "Nevertheless, the labor party movement, from the point of view of the workers themselves, does reveal a progressive development in general towards class consciousness. In Spite of the channels into which it is led by the bureaucrats, it shows in the masses a growing realization of the true character of capitalist politics as summed up in the Republican and Democratic Parties and a striving for independent political action. To stand aside 'completely' from such a development where it compromises the bulk of the militant and advanced sections of the workers would be hopelessly sectarian for the revolutionists!" (p.18)

According to the Trotskyites, the Labor Party movement becomes progressive (since their expulsion, you see, the SP is no more progressive) because it "reveals a progressive development toward class consciousness" But why limit the progressiveness to the Labor Party, gentlemen? If the workers move over to the Stalinist Party, would that be a still more "progressive movement" of workers away from capitalist politics? Or, gentlemen, if the workers moved to an organization such as the POUM, SAP, or any other organization which you term centrist, would that show still a more progressive shift of workers? Every political degree that the workers "move" is looked upon as progressive, even though the workers are snared into a Party which the SWP refers to as

"these reformist parties", acting "in practice and in crisis as bulwarks of capitalism and enemies of the socialist revolution. Their false program and perspective disorient the masses, turning them aside from revolutionary class struggle, and permit the forces of reaction to consolidate without effective opposition." (p.17-18)

This movement of workers toward a labor party reveals at once a "progressive development" and this "progressive development" acts as "one of the bulwarks of capitalism and enemies of the socialist revolution." Did anyone ever hear "logic" of that kind? How can any reformist organization be progressive?- how can anything, we beg of you, that acts "in practice and in crisis (in practice and in crisis being generalized terms themselves, for a reformist party always assumes this role), as a bulwark of capitalism and an enemy of the socialist revolution."? Perhaps



it is only "progressive" for those contemplating entrance into such a reformist party, always to be sure with "programmatic independence" Eternal reform of parties, universal deform of Marxism- that is the role of Trotskyism! For Lenin knew, and Trotsky forgot, that no reformist party or contrist party could be reformed- made revolutionary. Above all, Lenin was the outstanding fighter for the independence of the vanguard. It is the old Trotsky of 1903, the fighter for non-independence of the vanguard, whom we, as Lenin previously had to, must struggle against. The consistency of Trotsky on this basic question is remarkable over such a long period of years. He is consistently erroneous

We have analyzed the position of Trotskyism on the fundamental questions of the day- bourgeois democracy, fascism (which includes the state, army, etc) war and the party. On all these fundamental questions, in action, Trotskyism is seen to have more in common with Stalinism than Leninism. The road of departure of Trotskyism from Bolshevism has been clearly marked. It is the 1903 child of Menshevism that Trotsky has conjured up for his followers. It must be exposed as such. The prostitution of Lenin's work has thrived ever since his death. Trotsky has not violated Lenin's work least. He vies for this "honor" with Stalin, only being more treacherous than the latter due to his left phrases and martyrish position on the political scene. We desire no part of Trotsky- like all contrist tendencies Trotskyism must be smashed and the goods elements won over to Leninism! The revolutionary tide must find Trotskyism washed ashore and blown along by the sands of time to appear only in writings dedicated to the archaic study of Menshevism. Trotskyism has one distinction, nevertheless, of which we would certainly not deprive it- it opportunely submerged itself, from 1917 to 1924, to Bolshevism. Let us now bury Trotskyism with all due honor, for its putrid corpse emanates odors which would contaminate that healthy object in which Trotskyism once submerged itself. For by its very nature, "sterile and incapable of leading an effective and successful struggle for the socialist revolution", and with it "Marxism therefore, cannot tolerate no conciliation."

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